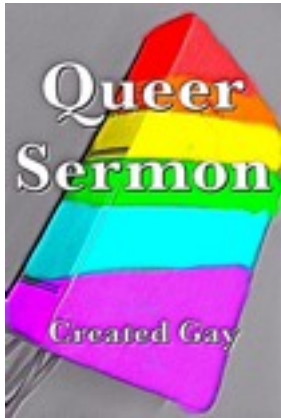


CREATED GAY



The Sin of Adding Burdens to God's People

by Gary Simpson

1 Samuel 2:12-17 (KJV) Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the Lord. 13 Now it was the practice of the priests that, whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled 14 and would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. 15 But even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."

16 If the person said to him, "Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force."

17 This sin of the young men was very great in the Lord's sight, for they[a] were treating the Lord's offering with contempt.

1 Samuel starts with the story of Samuel's birth. Hannah wanted a child. Elkanah, her husband, was supportive, loving her and taking good care of her. He told her that he treated her better than ten sons would treat her.¹ Elkanah's words of love did not seem to comfort Hannah very much. According to the Biblical story, Elkanah gave her twice as much as anybody else.²

Each year, Elkanah took his family to the Tabernacle, which was in Shiloh. You see, three times a year each male was to travel to the sanctuary. This particular trip may have been around the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.³ We get the impression that on each trip Hannah cried and would not eat.

The trips could have been especially challenging for Hannah, because Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, took all of her children along. To make matters worse, Peninnah probably made fun of Hannah, because Hannah had no children. A Jewish commentary gives the sense that Peninnah taunted Hannah asking, "Have you bought something new for your baby?"⁴ There does not appear to be evidence in the Bible to support that position. Peninnah seems to have provoked Hannah and she might have gloated on each trip to the Tabernacle because Peninnah had more children than Hannah.⁵

¹ 1 Samuel 1:8.

² 1 Samuel 1:5.

³ Kenneth Barker, et. al., eds. *The NIV Study Bible: New International Version*. (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Zondervan Pub. house, 1985), 62.

⁴ Nosson Scherman, et. al., eds. *The Stone Edition Tanach*. (Brooklyn, New York: Meshorah Pub., 1996), 646.

⁵ Finis Jennings Dake. *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible*. (Lawrenceville, Georgia: Dake Bible Sales, 1981), 2.

Unfortunately, the times of most religious and family significance can be burdened with pain. Some of that pain may come from family members. Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter are important family times. For closeted gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender teenagers and young, family holidays can be especially stressful. There is fear of typical personal questions:

- Have a boyfriend?
- Got a girlfriend?
- When are you going to get married?
- How come you aren't married? What's wrong with you?

Queer people who are out may face stressful and awkward questions and comments:

- What am I supposed to call you?
- In reference to your significant other, what do I call him or her?
- Which of you is the man in the relationship?
- Using the wrong name or the wrong gender.
- You are not staying with us as long as you are with him or her.

A time of the year that is often associated with hope, good times and amazing food becomes a season of dread. Hannah went to the Tabernacle to seek God, which is not a bad strategy when times are stressful or demeaning. She cried to the Lord, promising that if she was given a son she would dedicate his entire life to God. That was quite the promise. Levites served God for 25 years, retiring at age 50.⁶ Hannah's promise appears to have been for an entire life of service, not just 25 years.⁷

As Hannah was talking to God, Eli the priest saw her. In 1 Samuel 1:14, we read that Eli figured she was drunk. Drinking too much appears to have been common at worship feasts.⁸ We are not sure how many people prayed as fervently as Hannah did, so Eli might not have been used to seeing people pray with such fervency.⁹ Given the fact that cultic prostitution was common in the Canaanite religions, I wonder if Eli thought that Hannah was one of the cultic prostitutes.

When Eli understood why Hannah was seeking God, he comforted Hannah.¹⁰ "Cheer up! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him." Your Bible may read, "Go in peace." When you have a breaking heart, leaving in peace is being cheered up.

⁶ Adam Clarke. *Clarke's commentary*. Vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, n.d.), 207.

⁷ Clarke, 207.

⁸ Edward E. Hindson and Woodrow Kroll, eds. *The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1994), 534 and Clarke, 208.

⁹ Luder Whitlock, et. al., eds. *New Geneva Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Pub., 1985), 337.

¹⁰ 1 Samuel 1:17.

God answered Hannah's prayer. Hannah's prayer resulted in one of the seven miraculous conceptions in the Bible.¹¹ The next two miraculous conceptions in the Bible are the births of John the Baptist and Jesus.¹²

Hannah's prayer was powerful. One commentary observes Hannah's prayer was effective, because she had an intense desire, she asked for what she wanted, she had faith¹³ and she lived as one who knew her prayer would be answered.

Hannah raised Samuel until he was weaned. Weaning in ancient times took place later than it does in our contemporary, western culture. Samuel may have been weaned at about the age one or two years of age.¹⁴ But Samuel may have been quite a bit older than that. Some estimates run as old as three to five years.¹⁵ After Samuel was weaned, he was taken to the Tabernacle to serve God.

Taking the story to chapter three of 1 Samuel. While serving God, Samuel received a call to be a prophet. It was not an easy call Samuel received. Samuel's first task was to bring a message of condemnation to Eli and Eli's family. Now that is a challenging task. Think about that for a moment. How would you like to tell your boss that God is going to take him down?

Some pastors face the same situation today. They need to take a message to the congregation that God is not pleased with them. Many queer and straight Christians have brought a message of condemnation and a message of need for repentance to their churches and to the broader Christian community for their homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. As queer people of faith, we bring a message to the entire Christian community saying that God is not pleased with religiously-inspired homophobia and hate. We call upon the Christian community to show the spirit of grace and inclusion shown in the life and ministry of Jesus.

1 Samuel 3:14 - Samuel was to tell Eli that his sins and the sins of his sons were so significant that they could not be forgiven by sacrifices or offerings. You may be wondering why God wanted Samuel to carry that message.

1 Samuel 2:12-17 indicates that Eli's sons did not know God. The New American Standard Bible translates the passage saying that Eli's sons were "worthless." God had concerns about how Eli's sons treated the method sacrifices were made. The King James Bible says Eli's sons were sons of Beliel. This was a common expression, meaning a person was very wicked.¹⁶ in the *New Living Trans-*

¹¹ Dake, 295.

¹² Dake, 295.

¹³ Harold Lindsell. *Harper Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Pub., 1985), 344.

¹⁴ David F. Payne. *The Daily Study Bible Series: I & II Samuel*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 11.

¹⁵ Hezekiah made provisions for Levites from about 3 years and older (Dake, 295). Dake cites the case of Isaac, who was weaned at age 5. See Genesis 16:16 and 21:1-8.

¹⁶ Edward Hindson and Woodrow Kroll, eds. *The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1994), 534.

lation, they are called scoundrels. The Hebrew saying could be translated sons of worthlessness.¹⁷ Adam Clarke, a respected old commentator, says they were the devil's children.¹⁸

1 Samuel 2:12-17 Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord. And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.

We think that the priests traditionally took a random stab in the pot of sacrificial food. The meat that was stabbed belonged to the priest. The assumption was that God determined what was a fair amount for the priest.¹⁹ Only boiled meat, meat without any fat, was to be taken by the priests.

Eli's sons did not do that way. They sinned by not stirring the pot for their meat. The sons took the best meat and they also took raw meat. If they could not get what they wanted, the meat was taken by force.

Eli's sons were guilty of serious sins. As a result of their actions, people hated giving God offerings. The sons stole from people, had sexual sins with women at the very door of the Tabernacle and they refused to stop when their sins were discovered.²⁰ The sexual relations they had with ladies at the door of the Tabernacle might have been part of an act of worship to another god. Eli's sin was that he did not stop his sons sins.

Serious sins. Perhaps, you are glad that those sins are not present in the church now? Or are they present in contemporary Christian churches?

Some people are guilty of serving God out of greed. They serve God for profit or prestige. And it is not limited to the clergy. Some lay people only attend church, because it is good to seen in the right church.

Eli's sons showed no respect for either the law of God or for the sacrifice. Some people still do that. They show little respect for the World, because they continually add to the Word and add a multitude of rules and laws to the church that are not even in the Bible. And they show no respect for the sacrifice of Calvary, because they limit access to God, limit access to the Kingdom and to the church. Their emasculated view of God does not allow God to love or to include everybody. As a result of their lack of respect for the sacrifice of Calvary they insult queer people and God.

Meat was a luxury in Samuel's day. When Eli's sons took more than their share, they placed heavy demands on the people. Like Eli's sons, some people are guilty of placing demands on people that God does not place on people. They add to the gospel of inclusion when they teach what people

¹⁷ This is supported in two sources. (1) Robert Jamieson. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*. Vol. 1, Part 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Pub., 1995), 139 and (2) *Hebrew and Greek Transliterated Bible: QuickVerse*. (Hiawatha, Iowa: Parsons Technology, 1992/1993).

¹⁸ Clarke, 212.

¹⁹ Barker, 377.

²⁰ Dake, 296.

must do to be loved by God, to be considered acceptable by God and to be saved. By the time some people are done, you must be baptized in just the right way and in correct temperature of water, read the right version of the Bible, attend the right church service - the early morning service is always more spiritual you know, listen to the right kind of Christian music, have the right style of hair, wear the right style of clothes, eat only the right food, pay multiple tithes, witness to everyone you meet, find the right gender of people attractive, never get ill, never need to see a counsellor and never make a mistake. Just reading the list is exhausting. And, if you can do all of those things, perhaps, God will extend grace to you.

What else can we learn from the story of Samuel? We can learn things about spiritual leadership and about living a life of service.

Samuel was one of the greatest prophets and judges of Israel. Elkanah was Samuel's father and Hannah was Samuel's mother. Elkanah means God creates.²¹ Hannah means grace.²² When God's grace and God's creating powers combine, the result is leadership.

Samuel's early life illustrates service. 1 Samuel 2:11 And the boy became God's helper, by assisting Eli the priest. When we serve others and especially when we serve others in the church, we serve God. And as we serve God more, we end up serving people more. A Jewish commentary notes that serving a righteous scholar is equivalent to serving God.²³

Perhaps, you can relate to Hannah. The scene was Shiloh, which literally means rest.²⁴ Hannah went to the place of rest, but she had no peace. Sabbath comes, but at times it comes without peace. All of the gifts of Christmas cannot buy happiness or peace or ease pain. Is there some emptiness in your life.

God is here and God would like to fill the emptiness of your heart. God cares and stands ready to comfort you.

Needing a miracle? The God who moved in Hannah's life still moves in lives. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is still in the business of changing lives.

Only seven people in the Bible received the same miracle Hannah received. God is capable of doing more than that. The God who intervenes to change history is willing to step in and change the direction of your life.

Prayer:

Lord, you moved on a barren womb and gave it life. The life was one of the greatest lives in the Bible.

Move in our barren lives. Out of our hearts, create powerful lives of service.

Touch each need here. Give each person a testimony for you, a testimony that has loving arms. Make this church a place of rest and peace, on a day of rest and peace.

²¹ *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour, 1987), 89.

²² *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, 122.

²³ Scherman, et. al., 648.

²⁴ *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, 284.